

These statistics remind us of the magnitude of the problem, but also indicate that the majority of attempted abductions will fail. In many cases, an abduction is prevented by a teacher, a law enforcement officer, or a watchful neighbor. A concerned and engaged community is our best resource in the war against child abduction.

When a child is abducted by a stranger, time is of the essence. Research shows that 74 percent of children abducted and later murdered are killed within the first 3 hours following the abduction. If alerted quickly, a community can help save the life of an endangered child by providing timely and useful information.

Tonight I speak in support of two programs that help strengthen the partnership between local law enforcement and the public to aid in the search for missing children. The AMBER Plan, America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response, was created 5 years ago in honor of Amber Hagerman, who was abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas.

The AMBER Plan relies on voluntary participation of law enforcement agencies and radio and television broadcasters to activate an urgent alert following an abduction. Broadcasters use the emergency alert system to interrupt radio and television programming to provide information concerning the missing child and the possible suspect. This plan is now in place in several communities in my home State of Kansas and other locations across our country. To date, the plan has been credited with saving the lives of 16 children. This life-saving program can and should be expanded across the Nation.

Like the AMBER Plan, the Lost Child Alert Technology Resource, or LOCATER program, works to rapidly circulate information concerning a missing child. This program provides local law enforcement agencies with a computer and the equipment necessary to scan photographs of missing children for distribution to fellow law enforcement agencies and to the public. The equipment provided as part of the LOCATER program is free of charge through the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children.

Few things are more frightening than the abduction of a child. As we work to secure our Nation from terrorists, we must also remember the safety of our children. Kansans, like most Americans, take pride in being good neighbors, people willing to lend a helping hand in time of crisis. This is what makes our community strong, and this is what can make the AMBER Plan and the LOCATER program successful in providing a more secure America for our children.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, as part of my continuing series on Social Security and women, I would like to focus this evening's comments on the financial risks that I believe are posed by privatizing the Social Security program.

Social Security privatization would expose individual workers and their families to financial risks which they do not face under the current system. Under privatization, Social Security benefits would no longer be determined primarily by a worker's earnings and the payroll tax contributions she made over her career. Rather, benefit levels would be determined by the vagaries of the stock market, by a worker's skill, or just plain luck in making investments, and by the timing of his or her decision to retire.

Social Security today provides a guaranteed lifelong benefit. No matter what the stock market does the day one retires or in the months leading up to retirement, our benefit will be unaffected. Advocates of individual accounts argue that, since fluctuations in the stock market average out over time, individual investment risk is negligible. Averages are misleading. For every person whose investments perform above average, there is another person counting on Social Security whose investments perform below average. Retirees are not just averages; retirees are individual people.

Between March, 2000, and April, 2001, the S&P 500 fell by 424 points, or 28 percent. If Social Security had been privatized, a worker who had his or her individual account invested in a fund that mirrored the S&P 500 and who retired in April of 2001 would have 28 percent less to live on for the rest of his or her life.

There were 15 years in the past century, 1908 to 1912, 1937, 1939, 1965 through 1966, 1968 through 1973, in which the real value of the stock market fell by more than 40 percent over the preceding decade. That is from the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office.

Social Security protects against many risks, including the risk of death or disability, the risk of low lifetime earnings, the risk of unexpectedly long life, and the risk of inflation. Privatization undermines these protections and adds one more risk that workers would have to worry about: individual financial risk.

Because of a number of factors, women are more likely than men to be negatively impacted and affected by these financial risks. Women tend to outlive their husbands by an average of 7 years. Reductions in Social Security payments due to lack of funds would leave stranded many women without their husband's Social Security income. And because they live longer than men, women are at a greater risk of running out of money in their private account.

Women take time out of their work life to care for children and elderly

parents. Under a system of private accounts, they would pay less into their accounts and have less to draw down on when they retire.

Mr. Speaker, privatizing the Social Security program in my estimation poses unneeded financial risks, both on the seniors that have paid into Social Security with their hard work, and those young people just entering the workforce. And women would face the greatest risk of all under a privatized Social Security system.

ISSUANCE OF VISAS IS NOW A NATIONAL SECURITY FUNCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Subcommittee on Civil Service, Census and Agency Organization will begin examination of one of the most vital components of the President's homeland security proposal. Our homeland security starts abroad, and nothing is more important than who gets issued a visa.

The issuance of visas can no longer be thought of as a mere diplomatic function. It is now a national security issue, and must be our first line of defense. While the President recognizes the importance of visa issuance and the obvious problems, the current proposed legislation does not go far enough. The entire visa program should be part of the proposed Homeland Security Department.

The State Department views the issuance of visas as a diplomatic tool. The day is past when it should be viewed this way. It is now clearly a national security function. The fragmented approach, where the Secretary of Homeland Security issues regulations regarding visas, but actual operational control remains under the State Department, is not acceptable.

Just as we work hard to prevent biological, chemical, or other weapons of mass destruction from making their way to our shores, so we must keep terrorists, deadly weapons in and of themselves, keep them from coming into our homeland. A strong visa issuance program is essential to achieve that objective.

We are all too aware of the fact that 15 of the 19 September 11 terrorists had obtained "appropriate" visas. This is unacceptable. No longer can the issuing of visas be a diplomatic function; it must be a security function, with proper scrutiny only a trained agent can apply. Diplomats are trained to be diplomats. Visa issuance should not be about speed and service with a smile.

Recent news reports have brought to light a program in Saudi Arabia called "visa express." It allows private Saudi travel agents to process visa paperwork on behalf of Saudi residents. Three of the September 11 terrorists obtained

their visas this way, never being interviewed by anyone in the consular office.

When the program began, it was advertised as helping qualified applicants obtain U.S. visas quickly and easily. Applicants will no longer have to take time off from work, they said, no longer have to wait in long lines or under the hot sun in crowded waiting rooms. I am quoting from State Department documents.

Here are some of the September 11 terrorists who came into this country under the visa express program. Salem Al-Hamzi, age 20, arrived in the United States with a tourist visa obtained through visa express.

Here is another one: Khalid Al-Midhar, a 25-year-old gentleman. He was one of the people on Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon.

Here is another one: Abdulaziz Al-Omari, 28, arrived in the U.S. on a tourist visa in June of 2001, a pilot of the American Airlines Flight 111 that crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centers.

Now, under this program, the Saudi citizens just go to a Saudi travel agent, and they fill out a two-page form. They paid a fee and went home and waited for their visas to arrive in the mail. There was no interview with any American official. One senior consular affairs official describes the program as an open-door policy for terrorists to come into the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we have our priorities out of order here. This is not customer service; it is national security. Visa issuance must be in the homeland security system from top to bottom. This is the only way the Secretary of Homeland Security will be able to completely and thoroughly protect our borders, by preventing terrorists from ever making it into our homeland.

We must change the culture of the way we issue visas. It is no longer sufficient for this process to be an entry-level position for a person at a college. It is simply too vital to our national security.

Mr. Speaker, security begins abroad. I feel the burden is on the administration to prove to us why the Bureau of Consular Affairs is fragmented and a pseudo part of homeland security. Thus far, they have not convinced me of the need for this fragmentation in this area. I support putting all of consular affairs in homeland security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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DRUG INDUSTRY NEEDS TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I heard a Republican member of the Committee on Ways and Means absolutely distort the truth about the Democrats' prescription drug plan, saying that it requires that seniors go into the Democrats' plan whether or not they choose to, whether or not they already have drug coverage. There is no place in this debate for those kinds of fabrications and those kind of lies, and I just want to set the record straight.

Mr. Chairman, the prescription drug industry needs to clean up its act. You know it. I know it. American consumers know it.

The brand name drug industry has no qualms about charging American consumers the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, even though American tax dollars and American contributions to private foundations fund nearly half their research, even though the prescription drug industry in this country is the most profitable industry in America, even though the prescription drug industry gets tax breaks so huge they have only half the tax liability of any other industry in this country, and even though more than 50 million Americans have no drug coverage, some of whom must choose between food and their medicine.

Prescription drugs are not a luxury item. It is not okay that the drug industry overcharges U.S. consumers for products our own tax dollars helped to produce. The drug industry has tremendous influence over this Congress and especially this White House. Unfortunately, the situation may have to get worse before the Federal Government finally takes a stand against the outrageous pricing schemes of the drug industry. Until that happens, market competition is the only tool we have to bring down prices.

When generics enter the market, the price typically drops as much as 90 percent. Market competition expands access to Americans who cannot afford the monopoly prices that are charged by the brand name companies. It spurs drug companies to earn their profits by developing new drugs, rather than by overcharging for existing products. It is much easier, obviously, to overcharge for existing products than to develop new ones. The brand name drug industry has taken to exploiting loopholes in the FDA drug approval process to block generic competition. So not only do drug companies charge Americans the highest price in the world while those drugs are under patent, these companies then try to charge Americans ridiculous prices after their patents expire by blocking generics from entering the market.

You would think Congress would at least be interested in keeping drug companies from gaming the patent system as a means of cheating American consumers.

Governors from both parties, major businesses like GM and Marriott and Verizon and unions and consumer groups and health insurers have demanded that Congress close these legal loopholes. Closing these loopholes would save American consumers literally hundreds of billions of dollars in the next 10 years. Yet, last week, Republican leadership blocked action on an amendment that would end drug industry abuses. This amendment simply would have prevented drug companies from artificially extending their patents, the drugs' protected patents and stop them from gaming the FDA patent system.

Last week, Republican leadership blocked consideration of this amendment. They would not, in fact, even let the Committee on Energy and Commerce consider the amendment. It may not have been a coincidence that the same week that our committee was marking up the prescription drug bill, that same week that committee adjourned early one afternoon to go to a Republican fund-raiser which was underwritten by the prescription drug industry. The chair of that Republican fund-raiser which netted \$30 million was the CEO of a British drug company, GlaxoWellcome, donated \$250,000 to the Republican cause. The CEO was joined by CEOs of other drug companies which contributed \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000, \$250,000 to this Republican fund-raiser.

It should also come as no surprise that the next day after the fund-raiser Republicans returned to the committee and, in regular party line votes, voted against any kind of real reform, any kind of pro-senior prescription drug plan.

The Democratic prescription drug plan written by and for seniors will bring drug costs down. That is what seniors want. The Republican prescription drug plan written by and for the prescription drug industry does nothing to bring prices down. That is what prescription drug companies want.

I ask my colleagues to support the Democratic plan when it comes in front of the House and reject the drug-company-sponsored Republican plan.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 we established Medicare because the private insurance industry demonstrated that it could not provide affordable access to health care for seniors, at least not at rates that seniors could afford. Now, 37 years later, this Congress will be considering important changes to